THE HISTORY OF PALGRAVE GARDENS

In 1756 the villages of St Marylebone, Paddington and Islington were outside the limits of built-up London, and St John's Wood was an isolated farmstead. Following representations from influential residents, a new toll road was built linking the three villages, by-passing the northern boundary of London. The main purpose of the new road was to allow animals bound for the Smithfield meat market to avoid the increasingly congested route along Oxford Street and Holborn. For many years thereafter the road was known as New Road, but is now Marylebone Road and Euston Road.

Subsequent development consisted mostly of infill building to the south of the new road, and in 1795 the only development to the north of this road was a row of fashionable houses, set well back, and a playing field for the relatively new game of cricket on Dorset Fields, the site of what is now Dorset Square.

The cricket pitch was established here by Thomas Lord. The first match was played in 1787, under the auspices of the newly formed Marylebone Cricket Club. A year later, it laid down a Code of Laws, requiring the wickets to be pitched 22 yards apart and detailing how players could be given out. Its laws were adopted throughout the game and MCC today remains the custodian and arbiter of laws relating to cricket around the world.

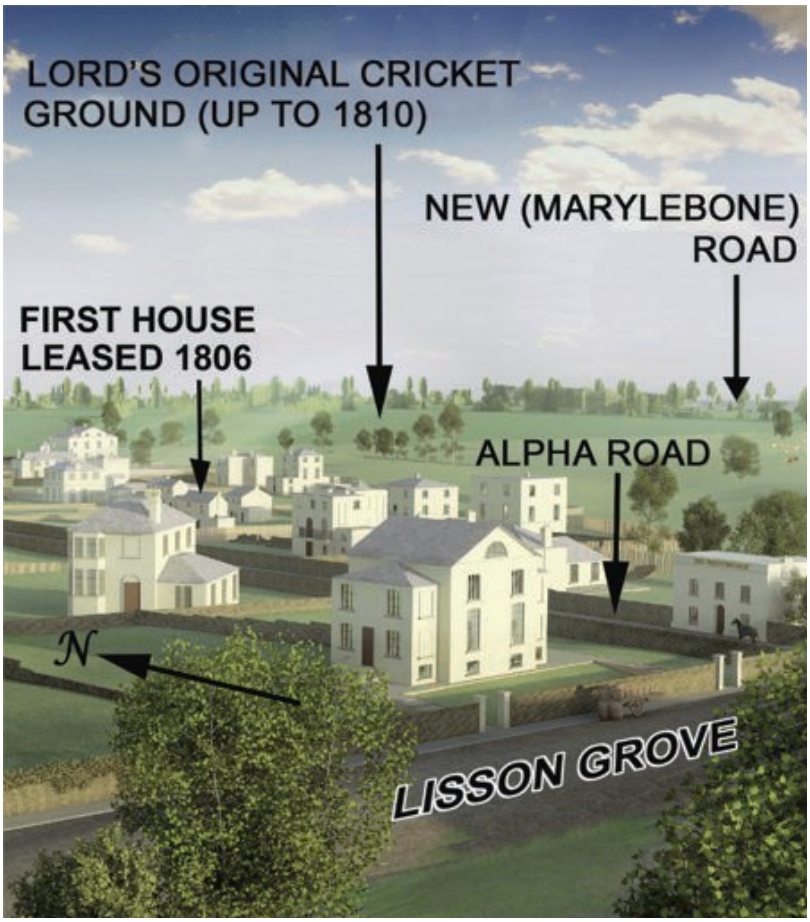
To the north were only open fields and a lane across them to St John's Wood farm, situated close to the present underground station.

St. John's Wood had been part of the Great Forest of Middlesex. The name derives from its mediaeval owners, the Knights of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, which took over the land from the Knights Templar in 1323. After the Reformation and the dissolution of monastic orders, St John's Wood became Crown land, and Henry VIII established royal hunting grounds in what became known as Marylebone Park, south of the wood.

St John's Wood farm and the New Road in 1795

The Henry Eyre, a London wine merchant, purchased the fields of Marylebone Park in 1732 and in the early 1800's his family produced plans to develop the area. The first stage of building, known as Alpha Cottages, began in 1808. The central road of the new development ran from what is now Alpha Close to the junction of Lisson Grove with Church Street and there were also several side streets. One of these, on the site of what is now Palgrave Gardens, was later named Boscobel Street.

Boscobel is a parish in Shropshire, where in 1651 King Charles II hid in an oak tree to escape capture by parliamentary soldiers after the battle of Worcester.



An annotated impression of Alpha Cottages in 1815 from the book *Cottages and Villas: The Birth of the Garden Suburb* by Mireille Galinou

Alpha Cottages was the first development in London to abandon the terrace house in favour of the semi-detached villa. Although comparatively inexpensive, the houses were of imaginative design, and their large gardens and park like setting attracted artists and authors, as well as craftsmen, merchants and lawyers. There were also some more substantial detached villas. One of these was designed and occupied by Charles Heathcote Tatham, a flourishing architect with a practise in Queen Street, Mayfair. Among his work was the design of the sculpture gallery at Castle Howard. The house became a focus of artistic activity: visitors included William Blake, Benjamin Robert Haydon, and Samuel Palmer. In 1812, the painter John Linnell produced a watercolour entitled *Tatham's Garden, Alpha Road, at Evening*. The work, which is now in the Tate Gallery, clearly shows the rural nature of the area at the time.

Tatham's Garden, Alpha Road, at Evening – John Linnell, 1812

In 1811 the Prince Regent, later King George IV, commissioned architect John Nash to create a master plan for the area of Marylebone Park. Nash originally envisaged a palace for the Prince and a number of grand detached villas for his friends, but when this was put into action from 1818 onwards, the palace and most of the villas were dropped. However, most of the proposed terraces of houses around the fringes of the park were built. Nash did not complete all the detailed designs himself; in some instances, completion was left in the hands of other architects such as the young Decimus Burton. The Regent Park scheme was integrated with other schemes built for the Prince Regent by Nash, including Regent Street and Carlton House Terrace in a grand sweep of town planning stretching from St. James's Park to Parliament Hill. The park was first opened to the general public in 1835, initially for two days a week.

In 1810 Thomas Lord moved his cricket ground to a site at the north end of what is now Paveley Street, on the Lisson Green Estate. A plaque identifying the site can be seen from the canal towpath opposite.

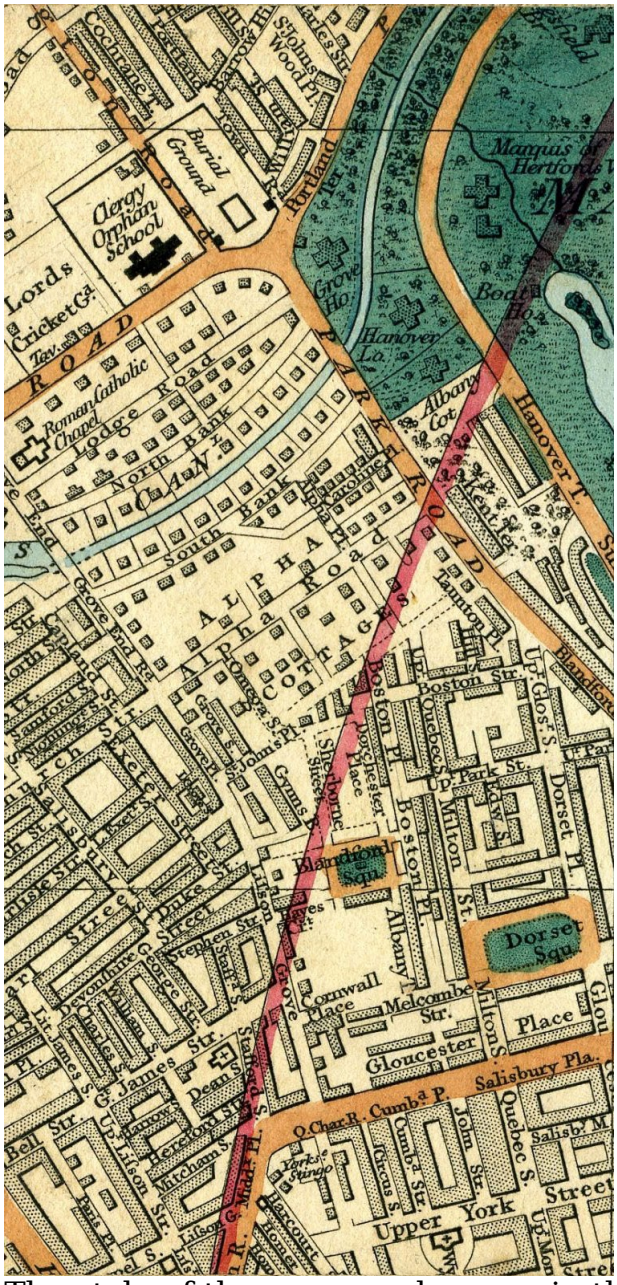
In 1816, the Regent's Canal was built to link the Grand Junction Canal's Paddington Arm with the Thames at Limehouse. One of the directors of the canal company was again John Nash, and his friend

the Prince Regent allowed the use of his name for the project. The Regent's Canal Act was passed in 1812 and a company was formed to build and operate it. Nash's assistant, James Morgan, was appointed as the canal's Engineer. The first stage, from Paddington to Camden, was opened in 1816 and contributed to the rapid expansion of the area.

Lord’s second cricket ground stood in the path of the new canal, so in 1814 it moved again to a new rural site - previously a duck pond – across the canal in St John's Wood. It remains MCC's home to this day.

By 1829 much of the New Road was bordered by fashionable houses, and it was in that year that the first horse omnibus service in London was establish by George Shillibeer. His example started a trend, which was followed by many others, and the route became the main artery for such traffic for the remainder of the century, linking the sought-after northwestern suburbs with the financial centre of the City of London.

By 1837 the area was fully developed. Substantial villas designed by John Nash lined both banks of the canal. The tavern had been built at Lord’s cricket ground, and the roads of Alpha Cottages had begun to acquire individual names, with Alpha Road, Alpha Place and Omega Street shown on this map of 1837.



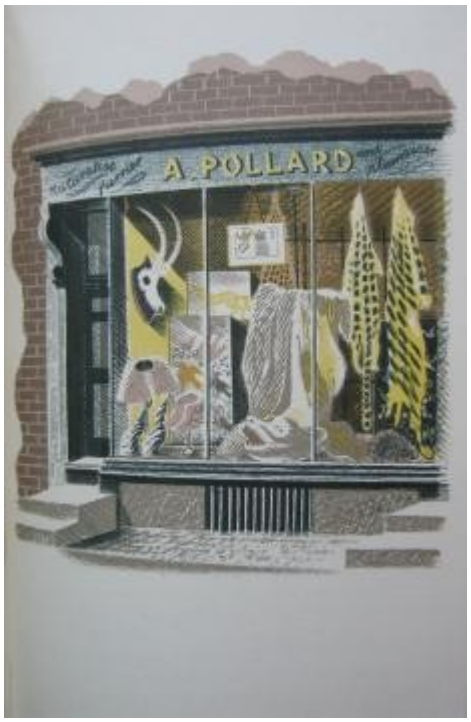
The style of the area can be seen in the range of occupations of the residents in the 1841 census. Almost half were of independent means, and nearly all had living-in servants. The working householders included a dancing master and a professor of music, as well as someone describing himself simply as theatrical. There were three clergymen and a surgeon, as well as a range of tradespeople.

In 1861, residents included a Russian Prince and two peers, both Members of Parliament. Lord Adolphus was MP for North Durham and Robert, Earl of Kingston was a member of the House of Lords. The artistic community was represented by a lithographer, an author and a portrait painter, as well as a young lady describing herself as an artiste. There was also a small school, with 11 boarding pupils aged between four and ten.

By 1871 the school has become St Ann’s Roman Catholic Orphanage for poor girls, and was home to 37 children. Also in Alpha Road and around the corner in Omega Place were two boarding houses, home to a total of 53 porters of Messrs Spencer Turner & Sons, a huge wholesale and retail drapers warehouse in Lisson Grove.

Later residents included Charles Bell Birch, the sculptor whose bronze Griffin can still be seen on the Temple Bar Memorial outside the Law Courts in Fleet Street.

Albert Pollard, who described himself a naturalist and furrier, also lived in Alpha Road. He was actually a taxidermist, and has a shop in Upper Baker Street.



This lithograph of Arthur Pollard's shop in Upper Baker Street was one of a series of 24 images of unusual shops entitled *High Street*, by Eric Ravilious. It

Frederick George Cotman, a well-known artist, lived in Boscobel Place in 1891. His most famous work, *One of the Family*, is in the Walker Gallery in Liverpool.

The population in the 1890's remained a mixture of well-to-do traders, professional people and artist.

Alpha Road and its environs in 1885. The contrast in layout between the area and those to the south and

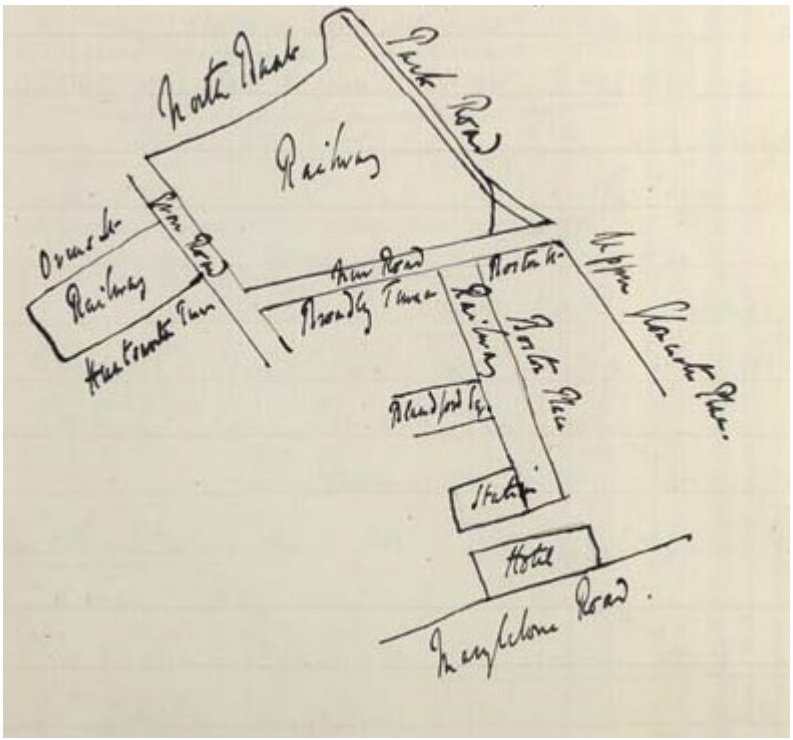
But all this was soon to change. In 1895, building work started for a railway line linking the network of the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway to London. In recognition of this extension of its system, the company changed its name to the Great Central Railway.
For much of the route through north London the line followed the tracks of the Metropolitan Railway, but at Lord's cricket ground it divided and followed an overground route to a new terminus on the site of Harewood Square, to be known as Marylebone Station. The construction required the demolition of the villas on the south bank of the Regent's Canal, as well as those in many roads to the south, and in the central section of Alpha Road, cutting the road into two parts.

Charles Booth was a remarkable English Victorian who can justly be described as one of the great and the good. On his own volition beginning in 1895 he devised, organised, and funded one of the

most comprehensive and scientific social surveys of London life that had then been undertaken.

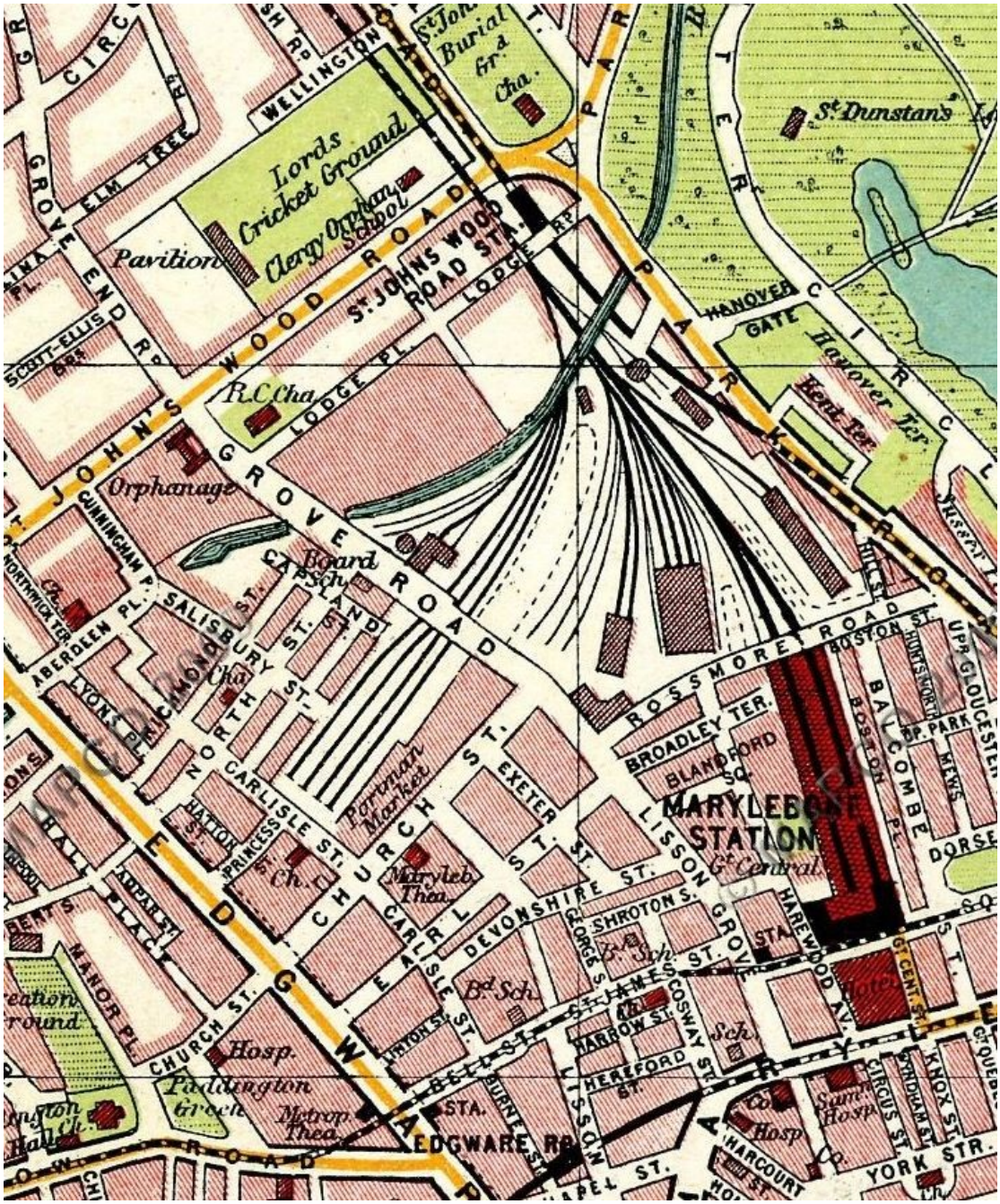
This is an extract from Booth's notebook written following a walk around the Alpha Road area on 14 December 1898.

Bridport Street, Brand Street and Broadly Terrace. These were good middle class and artisan streets: but the Great Central took them and all the old tenants left with compensation: since then they have been "let anyhow": for a long time they were inhabited largely by navvies at work on the line, a very rough lot. The work being nearly over most of them have gone, and a quieter lot have taken their place. The north side of Broadly Terrace is gone and the northern end of the two streets. Here is the new road made. The company own their line: it runs from Lisson Grove – leaving the south side of St John's Place – to the junction of Upper Gloucester Place and Park Road. The houses on the southern side are left but north of the road everything is gone up to North bank, with the exception of Hill Street and the houses facing on Park Road, ie Grove Road east side, Omega Place, Boscobel Gardens, Beta Place, Boscobel Place, Alpha Road, Alpha Place, Lorne Gardens. The following map shows the clearances roughly.



The new road described is now Rossmore Road. The railway consisted not only the main line into Marylebone, but also a turntable and engine shed to the east and a very large freight depot yard to the west. The goods yard opened in 1898 and was heavily used to transport coal into London. The Great Central Hotel, now

the Landmark Hotel, was already open, and the mainline passenger terminus opened in 1899.



The railway in 1908. St John's Wood Road station in Lodge Road was on the Metropolitan Railway. It was later renamed Lords, but closed in 1939 when the line was replaced by a new section of the Bakerloo Line, constructed in a deep-level tunnel between Baker Street and Finchley

Carlisle Street on this map is now known as Penfold Street, and Princess Street has been renamed Boscobel Street, perhaps to commemorate the demolished Boscobel Gardens and Boscobel Place. The area south of Aberdeen Place has now been redeveloped in the form of the Lilestone and Church Street Estates, but the old wall of the Marylebone Goods Depot can still be seen in Luton Street.

In Penfold Street and Hatton Street are buildings, which in 1920 were occupied by the Palmer Tyre Company. It was here that they produced wheel assemblies and gun turrets for Spitfire and Hurricane fighters and Lancaster and Wellington bombers during the Second World War. The parts were shipped from the Marylebone Goods Yard. The upper facade of the Hatton Street building still has projecting scale replicas of Spitfire aircraft.

On Park Road, Hanover Gate Mansions was built in the early years of the twentieth century, possibly in the twenties. Yoko Ono lived there in the sixties.

From its early days, Marylebone was not really a success as a London passenger terminus, although the freight yard prospered. The Great Central was the last main line into London to be built, and was scaled back from the planned ten platforms to just four due to financial difficulties of its developers. As a result it found it difficult to attract passenger traffic from the nearby termini of Euston, St Pancras and Kings Cross. The only major intercity service to use it was The Master Cutler, from Sheffield. The carriage accommodation to the east of the line was extended, however, into two three-line sheds.

The two engine sheds at Marylebone Station, before their demolition to make way for Palgrave Gardens. The rear elevation of Hanover gate Mansions can be seen in the

became a small suburban railway terminus, and the station increasingly rundown.

In the 1980's there was a proposal to close the station completely, extending the Metropolitan Line to Aylesbury and diverting other services into Paddington. Marylebone would then have been converted into a coach station, with the track replaced by a direct road for coaches only in and out of London. This plan proved impractical, however, and was dropped. During the late 1980s the station's fortunes changed when Paddington station became overcrowded and British Rail diverted many services into Marylebone. A multimillion-pound facelift followed, together with new rolling stock, financed by selling off the land where the former goods yard once stood. In 1996 following rail privatisation, the station was taken over by Chiltern Railways, who introduced a new intercity service to Birmingham's Snow Hill station and opened a new platform in 2006.

A new diesel depot was opened near Wembley Stadium railway station, which allowed the closure of the sidings and engine sheds and the sale of the land for redevelopment.

Barratt Homes acquired this site and in the early 2000's built a prestigious gated development of 300 apartments and penthouses marketed under the name Prince Regent's Gate. On completion Westminster Borough Council named the access road Palgrave Gardens, and it appears on the London street maps as a public road of that name, despite its enclosure by gates. The individual

buildings retain names with royal connotations. Elizabeth, Mary and Anne were Queens of England, and Albert was the consort of Queen Victoria.

Palgrave is a small village close to Diss in Suffolk. It was at one time was known as the "artists village" as many East Anglian painters lived there.

Francis Turner Palgrave (1824-1897) was a poet best known for his anthology of English poetry, *The Golden Treasury*.

Through these two associations, Palgrave Gardens retains a link with the artists who once lived here.